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THE CELEBRATION OF THE CENTENARY OF THE OXFORD MOVEMENT

By the BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER

Why should the Church celebrate the Oxford Movement? It is the business, it is said, of those who believe in it and represent its traditions. I think that that arises from a perverted view of what the Church of England is. It is thought that the Church of England is a body which consists of two or three parties. There is the Evangelical party which was created by the Evangelical Movement, the Anglo-Catholic party which was created by the Oxford Movement, and the Modernist party which was created by the Liberal Movement, and each must manage its own affairs. That is quite an erroneous conception of the Church of England. What the Church of England is at the present time is owing to the three great

movements, which have all of them influenced not their own particular followers merely but the whole Church, and the great majority of the members of the Church of England have a very loose allegiance to any party. There are many High Churchmen who are as earnest exponents of the Gospel as any Evangelical. The Evangelical interest in the worship of the Church and the manner of conducting services in almost all churches at the present day is the heritage of the Oxford Movement. There are many Evangelical Churchmen and many High Churchmen who owe their intellectual position and their belief in Christianity very largely to the influence of the Liberal school of thought. Each of the different schools of thought, and each of the different movements, represents one aspect of religion. The Oxford Movement and the High Church party represent the institutional side of religion; the Evangelical its spiritual influence; the Liberal Movement the intellectual element. And no Christian Church will be sound and healthy unless it combines all these three elements.

The reasons I would give for a corporate celebration of the Oxford Movement are as follows:

1. It was the greatest spiritual movement of the nineteenth century, not only in this country but throughout Christendom.
2. While the Evangelical Movement developed the Christianity of the individual, the Oxford Movement developed its corporate side—our fellowship in the Christian Church.
3. It developed the idea of Christian worship. The dignified services which the great majority of churches in this country have on the basis of the Prayer Book have been created entirely by the Oxford Movement, and it was that movement which more than any other emphasized the value of the English Prayer Book.
4. It was also a strong assertion of personal religion. A higher standard of personal life was demanded by the

Early Tractarians than in any other movement in the country. *The Christian Year* is only one of many influences which have permeated the Church.

5. It was also an intellectual movement and restored many sides of the intellectual presentment of Christianity. It was quite a natural development when in the face of intellectual problems the members of the *Lux Mundi* school went so far towards the conciliation between modern and traditional thought.
6. The influence of the Oxford Movement has passed far beyond the bounds of the Church of England, and its influence is still spreading in the revival of the idea of corporate Christianity and the demand for the unity of the Christian Church.

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